Guidelines for Closing the Gaps for All Students

Kentucky Department of Education

*"One cannot and must not try to erase the past
merely because it does not fit the present."*

- Golda Meir

Sherry Weatherspoon — Parent

Gene Wilhoit — Former Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

Melanie Tyner-Wilson — Parent - Special Needs Students

Robyn Hobson — Kentucky Department of Education

"Student learning is unlikely to improve without a change in teachers' knowledge, skills, practices, and, eventually, their attitudes and beliefs."

- Tom Guskey, author, Professor of Educational Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

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Developed by the Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council

Name	*Affiliation*
Roy Adkins	Special Needs Advocate
Rev. Dr. C.B. Akins, Sr.	Kentucky Board of Education
Cindy Baumert	Parent
Edwina Burke	Parent
Aukram Burton	Jefferson County Schools
Louise Byrd	District Achievement Gap Coordinator
Debbie Campbell	Highly Skilled Educator
Roger Cleveland	Eastern Kentucky University
Karen Dougherty	Christian County Schools
John Draud	Former Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education
Greg Figgs	Fayette County Schools
Rev. Richard Gaines	Faith-Based Community
Rina Gratz	District Achievement Gap Coordinator
Ronda Harmon	Kentucky Association of School Councils
Dewey Hensley	Jefferson County Schools
Stephanie Ivers	Kentucky Department of Education
Carol Jackson	Parent
Sandy Ledford	Jefferson County Schools
Cheryl Martin	Christian County Schools
Vince Mattox	Fayette County Schools
Brenda Maynard	Pike County Schools
Wilton McMillan	Kentucky Department of Education – Deaf/Hard of Hearing
Kelly Middleton	Mason County Schools
Rebecca Powell	Georgetown College
Rev. Marcellus Ridgeway	Faith-Based Community and Department of Juvenile Justice
Adam Ruiz	Centro Latino
Josh Santana	Lawyer/Hispanic Community
Rev. Thomas Simmons	Faith-Based Community
Lisa Smith	Shelby County Schools
Lynn Smith	Bethune Institute
Merrylyn Smith	Fayette County Schools
David B. Tachau	Kentucky Board of Education
Cathy Thrasher	Parent
Debra Vance	Covington Independent Schools
Stephanie Jill Vaught	Somerset Independent Schools

Expectation #4: Create open, honest communication about the work of the Kentucky Department of Education, individual districts and schools with all stakeholders.

Goal 10:
Collaborate with the media outlets to educate the public on new process and its purpose

Sample Evidence

- Place a positive focus on meaningful success rather than taking a defensive or accusatory stance based on areas of need.

- Explain clearly how the reporting model, designed to compare a school against itself for growth measures, is being utilized to address the needs of the school and district.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Capital Plaza Tower • 500 Mero Street • Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone: (502)564-4770 • www.education.ky.gov

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The vital work of closing achievement gaps between various groups of students cannot be accomplished without the close collaboration of many people and a clearly understandable set of expectations.

This document provides a guideline for the primary actions addressed by the Commissioner's Raising Achievement Closing Gaps Council (CRACGC).

I've charged CRACGC members with developing a report on next steps, including using the accountability system to close gaps; identifying successful interventions with steps toward their implementation; and developing a communications plan.

After much discussion and plenty of input, the group has developed four expectations:

- Provide information about the overall academic and social status of Kentucky schools and districts in a format that is useful and accessible to the public.

- Ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, disability or socioeconomic status, have access to a rigorous curriculum and get the support necessary to be successful in a rigorous curriculum.

- Create an environment of high expectations, with administrators, teachers and staff taking ownership for meeting the needs of all students.

- Create open, honest communication about the work of the Kentucky Department of Education, individual districts and schools with all stakeholders.

These expectations will guide our work and can be used by educators, parents, community members, elected officials and others as a model for their own efforts.

With the requirements of 2009's Senate Bill 1 and the accompanying Unbridled Learning initiatives at the Kentucky Department of Education, the need to close achievement gaps has an added imperative. We must ensure that ALL of Kentucky's children have the support, opportunity and resources they need to be successful throughout their public school experience and beyond.

I hope that this document will be the basis for a renewed commitment to equitable learning for children throughout our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.

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"You cannot look to parents or community or the school as individual gauges for student success and failure. We must all work with the tools we are presented, no matter their condition, and create a masterpiece. There are no excuses. Intelligence is not hereditary."

- Claude W. Christian

Goal 9:
Provide open communication with all stakeholders on the details of the new reporting system

Sample Evidence

- Limit the use of acronyms and "edu-speak" without explanations and definitions.

- Collaborate with community groups to determine the best ways to disseminate materials in culturally responsive ways.

- Clarify the roles for all stakeholders.

Expectation #3: Create an environment of high expectations, with administrators, teachers and staff taking ownership for meeting the needs of all students.

Goal 8:
Administrators and teachers should be intentional about changes to help students in the classroom.

Sample Evidence

- Redistribute effort by placing struggling students with experienced teachers who have a record of success and by providing support for new teachers to increase their confidence as they develop their teaching strategies (i.e., no more "silo teaching").

- Create flexible scheduling to accommodate the instructional needs of all students.

- Consider the use of "peer tutors" to assist students.

- Incorporate literacy skills in ALL classes and subjects.

Executive Summary

Under KRS 158.649, also known as Senate Bill 168, "achievement gap" means a substantive performance difference on each of the tested areas by grade level of the state testing system between the various groups of students including male and female students, students with and without disabilities, students with and without English proficiency, minority and nonminority students, and students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and those who are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

In March of 2000, Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit developed the Minority Student Achievement Task Force (MSATF) with a charge to:

- review and analyze existing data about the performance of Kentucky students, with particular emphasis on achievement gaps between majority and minority students
- investigate promising research and practices from Kentucky and the nation
- develop a set of actions, with timelines, for improving the performance of minority students in Kentucky

Out of the work of the task force, a report was generated in October of 2000 that outlined a set of recommendations for use by Kentucky school districts to reduce the minority student achievement gap.

In response to this report and to ensure that the lines of communication between the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the community remained open, the Commissioner's Educational Equity Council (CEEC) was developed. The CEEC was originally comprised of select members of the Minority Student Achievement Task Force. This group was charged with the continuation of the conversations that led to the development of the 10 Goals for Minority Student Achievement (later called the 10 Barriers to Learning). Initial demographic research showed that almost 75 percent of African-American students resided in only seven of the then 176 Kentucky school districts. These seven districts became the initial focus of all follow-up and resulted in the development of the Partnership for Minority Student Achievement (PMSA).

To address the findings of the task force, the PMSA, in conjunction with KDE, entered into an agreement with the Appalachian Educational Laboratory (AEL), which, in a co-venture with researchers from state and regional universities, began to analyze the impact of strategies implemented by the seven participating school districts. AEL had a 35-year history of applying research to educational practice and policy. This portion of the pilot project was designed to capture the procedural

process, planning and implementation used by each district to implement strategies to close the achievement gap. The KDE staff person assigned to facilitate the initial research project was Michael D. Dailey, then housed in the Office of Legal and Legislative Services. The partnership sites were:

Bardstown Independent
Christian County
Fayette County
Hardin County
Jefferson County
Owensboro Independent
Paducah Independent

KDE provided resources and professional development as follows:
- Implementation of Senate Bill 168
- Ed Trust New Counseling Initiatives
- Dr. Ruth Johnson's "Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap Workshop"
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Workshops
- Grants for Gifted and Talented Services
- Virtual High School AP Scholarships
- PMSA Contact meetings, giving each district the opportunity to share their ideas and strategies

The search for these successful promising programs was dubbed the "Dispelling the Myth Tour." While engaged in school visits, we were able to glean some promising practices that could be utilized across the state. Districts participating in the partnership showcased their findings and successes at the annual Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference.

This project provided a window into the specific work to be done to help students reach proficiency by 2014. Initial conclusions related to promising practices were drawn from this work . Several discussions emerged regarding the best method to implement strategies for statewide dissemination of findings as well as practices that would ultimately lead to high student achievement for all children of the Commonwealth.

After a brief hiatus in 2007, the purpose and charge of the council was reviewed and updated. In December 2007, the council was renamed the Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council and given the following charge:

1. Review and analyze in-school practices that affect culture, climate and equity for all students.
2. Review and analyze existing data about the performance of Kentucky students, with particular emphasis on achievement gaps between federal No Child Left Behind- (NCLB) recognized populations (e.g., race, special needs, free/reduced meals, gender and disability).

Expectation #3: Create an environment of high expectations, with administrators, teachers and staff taking ownership for meeting the needs of all students.

Goal 7:
Reinforce the implementation of professional development at all levels

Sample Evidence
- Utilize appropriate rubrics that include indicators of culturally responsive instruction for all teachers and administrators, including those in the teacher internship program.
- Hold administrators responsible for recognizing good implementation and for providing formative assessment for teachers and staff.

Expectation #3: Create an environment of high expectations, with administrators, teachers and staff taking ownership for meeting the needs of all students.

Goal 6:
Utilize available Interventions Research provided by the KDE or other agencies

Sample Evidence

- Review present interventions programs to determine value/usefulness toward meeting Kentucky's educational goals.

- Utilize or develop specific needs-based programs for individual schools

- Provide evidence of how the potential interventions programs and strategies chosen help address the identified needs of a school or district.

3. Investigate promising research and practices from Kentucky and the nation.
4. Respond to recommendations regarding strategies to identify schools in need.
5. Respond to the identification of schools where the gap is being closed in most, if not all, areas and recommend ways to present strategies that may be shared with other schools.

After a review of KDE's previous work on the achievement gap, Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday charged this council with developing a report of next steps for closing the achievement gap that included

- using the accountability system to close gaps
- identifying successful interventions with steps toward their implementation
- a communications plan

The council was divided into three groups to discuss and investigate information concerning each of the three areas. Each group had guiding questions to help focus the discussion that included:

Accountability

- What in SB168 can be strengthened by adding consequences for not meeting targets/closing achievement gaps?

- What can be done to assist schools that have reached the 100 percent goal but have significantly large achievement gaps between student populations?

- What does the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) application

include that can address low achievement in student populations?

- Should SB168 requirements be folded into the new Senate Bill 1 accountability system to avoid duplication? If yes, what are good ways to measure gaps? (Note: Senate Bill 1, passed in the 2009 session of the Kentucky General Assembly, mandated a new assessment and accountability system for the state's public schools.)

Interventions

- What can the KDE do to ensure implementation of these successful strategies across the state?

- What is necessary to create a culture of high expectations for all students in schools with large achievement gaps?

- What research is going on in the state focused on interventions related specifically to closing the achievement gap?

Communications

- What resources are in place that can be used for communicating best practices?

- What is the best process or method of communication, and who is the target audience?

- What is the process for determining the format/content of information that is distributed to the general public?

The discussions surrounding these questions resulted in more than 200 ideas and areas of focus important to the council. The council members considered all comments submitted and began to look at common threads in each area. These common threads were reduced to approximately 40 points, which were then reduced to four expectations:

1. Provide information about the overall academic and social status of Kentucky schools and districts in a format that is useful and accessible to the public.

2. Ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, disability or socioeconomic status, have access to a rigorous curriculum and get the support necessary to be successful in a rigorous curriculum.

3. Create an environment of high expectations, with administrators, teachers and staff taking ownership for meeting the needs of all students.

4. Create open, honest communication about the work of the

Expectation #2: Ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, disability or socioeconomic status, have access to a rigorous curriculum and get the support necessary to be successful in a rigorous curriculum.

Goal 5:
Engage in collaboration with parents and community members to address the academic and social (environmental) needs of the school and its students

Sample Evidence

- Conduct home visits at all grade levels.

- Utilize the Parent Information Resource Center and the PTA/PTO to assist in the increase of parent involvement.

- Partner with community groups to develop "real life" strategies for students based on specific needs.

- Create opportunities to "show" parents and community members how the school is progressing.

- Utilize available parent skills in the school and classroom.

- Develop relationships with parents and engage them when determining the needs of their students as well as with strategies to help students succeed in the classroom.

Expectation #2: Ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, disability or socioeconomic status, have access to a rigorous curriculum and get the support necessary to be successful in a rigorous curriculum.

Goal 4:
All schools and districts will foster the development of environments that result in respect of all socio-cultural differences

Sample Evidence

- Conduct cultural audits to determine the needs of each school and district.

- Engage in ongoing training in culturally responsive instruction for all district and school level administrators, teachers, staff and school-based decision making (SBDM) teams.

- Ensure that training addresses diverse areas including ethnicity, economic status, special needs and gender.

- Coordinate with other agencies including the Council on Postsecondary Education to implement culturally responsive training for new teachers.

- Provide evidence of a deliberate effort to diversify classified and certified staff

Kentucky Department of Education, individual districts and schools with all stakeholders.

These expectations and the related work around them are described in detail in this document. It includes specific guidelines that include all stakeholders, along with examples of how to implement the guidelines. Because we are all stakeholders in our young people, in their education and in their physical and social development, we will all have to work to close the achievement gap.

Why is closing the achievement gap important?

- Each student deserves an education that provides for high levels of achievement.

- It's the law (KRS 158.649;Senate Bill 168; No Child Left Behind), and all schools need to examine gaps

- Some schools will not get to proficiency without closing the gap.

Each of us has an important role to play if we are to succeed in reducing and eventually eliminating the achievement gap. We will face many challenges along the way. But we can, and we must, make an effort to ensure that ALL children in Kentucky can master a level of achievement that will make them productive members of society and the realization of our hope for the future.

"We can whenever and wherever we choose successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

-- Ron Edmonds, 1973 (educator, author, pioneer for Effective Schools)

Expectation #1: Provide information about the overall academic and social status of Kentucky schools and districts in a format that is useful and accessible to the public.

Goal 3:
Develop appropriate responses to information provided on report card

Sample Evidence

- Identify who is directly responsible (held accountable) for improvement.
- Describe a next steps "attack plan" that parents can understand.
- Collaborate with parents and community members to identify, develop and implement next steps.
- Develop or utilize an existing process for monitoring the effectiveness of the established next steps.

Expectation #1: Provide information about the overall academic and social status of Kentucky schools and districts in a format that is useful and accessible to the public.

Goal 2:
Develop District and School Improvement Plans in such a way that they provide necessary details to encourage student, parent and community participation in student and school improvement efforts.

Sample Evidence

- Improvement Plans should include data and strategies to address:
- current scores
- data on proficiency, gap and growth
- school and district rankings (within district and across state)
- basic nonacademic data (i.e., retention/dropout rate, faculty and administration experience)
- grade-level disaggregation within school
- disaggregated longitudinal data for all student groups
- cross-referenced disaggregation (i.e., low income-African American, low income-special needs, low income-special needs-white)

2010-2011 CRACGC Members

Council membership is a representation of many educational stakeholders. Members are identified by nomination and/or recommendation from KDE staff and administration as well as from other interested stakeholders. The CRACGC now consists of individuals representing agencies, schools and communities and who have an interest in equity and diversity issues.

Name	*Affiliation*
Donna Allen	Parent/Special Education PTA
Thuston A. Britt	Parent and Business Representative
Tracye Carey	Kentucky Department of Education
Claude W. Christian	Kentucky Department of Education
Barbara Connor	Fayette County School District
David Cozart	Lexington Urban League
Hassan Davis	Parent and Dept. of Corrections Representative
Margot Demaree	Bourbon County School District
Elaine Farris	Superintendent, Clark County School District
Ted George	High School Principal, Floyd County School District
Yolantha Harrison-Pace	Parent
Tracy Goff Herman	Kentucky Department of Education
Deborah Hicks	Kentucky Department of Education
Terry Holliday	Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education
Judy "JJ" Jackson	University of Kentucky
Lisa James	Carroll County School District
Marlene Jones	Campbell County School District
Billy Lange	Kentucky School for the Deaf
Deborah Mapp-Embry	Parent
Bernard Minnis Sr.	Jefferson County School District
Juan Pena	Kentucky Commission on Human Rights
Rebecca Powell	Professor, Georgetown College
Sandy Price	Christian County School District
Jaclyn Risden-Smith	Spencer County School District
Joshua Santana	Hispanic Community/Lawyer
Sande Shepherd	Parent
Donald W. Smith	Superintendent, Marion County School District
Lisa Smith	Shelby County School District
Larry Stinson	Kentucky Department of Education

Cintia Sutton	Paducah Independent School District
Donna Tackett	Kentucky Department of Education
Larry Taylor	Kentucky Department of Education
Robin Thacker	Henderson County School District
Brent VanMeter	Education Recovery Leader
Carl Lee Williams	Bellarmine University
Deborah Benberry Williams	Business - PNC Bank

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

- John Wooden, NCAA Basketball Coach

Expectation #1: Provide information about the overall academic and social status of Kentucky schools and districts in a format that is useful and accessible to the public.

Goal 1:
Utilize information from school and district report cards when developing focus points for District and School Improvement Plans

Sample Evidence

- Show how current and longitudinal data from the KDE is utilized to inform decisions

- Prioritize data to emphasize proficiency, gap and group growth.

- Develop Improvement Plans with user-friendly language with clear explanations of terms for public review.

- Make the Improvement Plan available in several formats that create easy access for all stakeholders.